



# The Real Martina

If you thought illustrator Michael Austin made Martina green just for fun, think again! The Cuban cockroach is bright green and can also be found right here in the United States. Here are some interesting facts about these colorful insects:

- *Panchlora nivea* is the scientific name for the Cuban cockroach. It's also known as the "green banana cockroach," because of the belief that it came into the U.S. in shipments of bananas.
- The name *Panchlora* comes from the Greek word *pan*, meaning all, and *chloros*, meaning green. You might recognize *chloros* from the word chlorophyll—the green pigment in plants that helps them make food.
- The full scientific classification for the Cuban cockroach is:
  - Kingdom:** Animalia (Animals)
  - Phylum:** Arthropoda (Arthropods)
  - Class:** Insecta (Insects)
  - Order:** Dictyoptera (Mantids and Cockroaches)
  - Family:** Blaberidae
  - Genus:** *Panchlora*
  - Species:** *nivea*
- The Cuban cockroach is in the Blaberidae family, which includes giant cockroaches. Other roaches in this family include the Giant Cockroach and the Madagascar Hissing Cockroach.
- Cuban cockroaches are native to Cuba, but are sometimes found in the lower United States, along the Gulf Coast from Florida to central Texas. They prefer a subtropical or tropical climate.
- Cuban cockroaches do not like to come indoors, preferring to live in woodpiles, thick vegetation, and the trunks of palm and coconut trees. The young cockroaches are often found in leaf litter and debris.
- Like other cockroaches, Cuban cockroaches develop in three stages: the egg, the nymph (the young insect), and the adult. This life cycle is called incomplete metamorphosis, because the young do not change appearance from nymph to adult or use a cocoon to mature.
- Adult cockroaches love to climb and are very strong fliers. They range in length from three-quarters of an inch to an inch.
- Cuban cockroaches are attracted to light, so often they are found near sources of artificial light like street lights. They are also nocturnal—active at night and rest during the daytime.
- They range in length from three-quarters of an inch to an inch.
- Like other cockroaches, Cuban cockroaches are scavengers—animals that feed on dead or decaying matter, like rotting food, plants, dead animals. They will even eat soap and paper.
- Cuban cockroaches are not considered pests, since they don't generally come into houses.
- Though many people do not find most roaches very appealing, some keep them as pets! The Cuban cockroach is valued as a pet for its beautiful bright green color.

